

**New Program Proposal
Associate in Health Sciences Degree
Major in Nursing
Spartanburg Technical College**

Summary

Spartanburg Technical College requests approval to offer a program leading to the Associate in Health Sciences degree, Major in Nursing (ADN), to be implemented in Fall 2004.

The Board of the State Technical College System approved the proposal on September 23, 2003. The proposal was submitted for Commission review on October 27, 2003. The proposal was reviewed without substantive comment and voted upon favorably by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs (ACAP) at its meeting on January 21, 2004. The proposal was delayed for presentation to the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing at the request of the staff of the State Technical College System to allow the State Board of Nursing's site team to conclude its evaluation of the proposal. A site visit by the State Board of Nursing occurred on March 2 and April 7, 2004. The State Board of Nursing's Advisory Committee on Nursing recommended approval of the program at its meeting on April 20, 2004, and the full Board will vote on it on May 20.

The purpose of the program is to prepare graduates who will be able to serve as Registered Nurses, upon passing the National Licensure Examination (NCLEX). The need for the program is based on a surging demand for new Registered Nurses, because of the aging nurse workforce and the increasing numbers of persons needing acute care. Growth in medical knowledge and the increased population of aging persons in the society are contributing causes for needing additional registered nurses. According to the representative from the State Technical College System at the ACAP meeting on January 21, 2004, the program represents a "transitioning" from USC-Spartanburg, which is giving up its ADN program, to Spartanburg Technical College. This transition is in keeping with the twenty-year position of the Commission on Higher Education that all associate degree programs should be offered by the Technical College system or two-year campuses of the University of South Carolina. However, this new program at Spartanburg Technical College will not involve the parallel "transitioning" of any faculty from the USC-Spartanburg ADN program to Spartanburg Technical College's emerging nursing faculty for the ADN program.

The need for the program is considered great, since the state of South Carolina and the Upstate region are experiencing a great and growing need for new Registered Nurses. The Southern region and the United States as a whole are also experiencing this rapid rise in demand for new registered nurses. Although two other educational models exist for producing registered nurses (i.e., a hospital-based “Diploma Program” and the four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing program), the associate degree model is most efficient in terms of time-to-degree. Historically it has been highly effective in the percentage of its graduates who pass the NCLEX (i.e., the examination which allows a nursing student graduate to become “Registered Nurse”) on the first attempt. Thus, the proposed program will represent a valuable additional program.

Adding to that value is the number of estimated students in the proposed program, a number which will double the annual number of graduates in the current ADN program at USC-Spartanburg. According to the proposal, there will be a demand for 373 new Registered Nurses in the three-county area of Union, Cherokee, and Spartanburg counties within the first three years of the program’s implementation. The proposal states that this program will annually graduate a total of 84-96 students eligible to become registered nurses. This estimate is based upon a total new student cohort each year of 120 (60 in the fall and 60 in the spring). It is important to note that even if the larger number of graduates is achieved, the institutional output of this new program will still be 85 below the number necessary to fill estimated demand for new nurses in the area in the program’s first three years; if the lower number of graduates pertains, the differential between demand and supply will be 121 for that period.

In the survey of need conducted by the institution in Spring 2003, respondents at the hospitals surveyed were described as “reluctant” to estimate nursing needs beyond two years into the future. Nationally, it has also been difficult to assess long-term need for nursing staffs, because hospitals, the largest employer by far of R.N.s, are beholden not only to their own generated revenues for paying for patient needs, but also to the federal government’s levels of reimbursement to the hospitals for having the resources to pay for healthcare employees. Because the “market demand” for nurses is driven greatly not only by free market forces, but also, importantly, by federal government spending for health care, long-term projections of employment hiring are uncertain, even in the face of growing social need.

After the first year of the program’s operations, the administration of Spartanburg Technical College has stated that it will develop a plan in the hospitals that the program will use for clinical rotations to have two different cohorts of nursing students (i.e., morning and evening) to produce the numbers of graduates specified in the proposal. This novel approach for finding clinical space differs from most ADN and BSN programs in the state which rely mostly on day-time clinicals during regular work days (Monday-

Friday). This plan will require more efforts placed on hiring and retaining an appropriate faculty cohort for this undertaking.

The curriculum will consist of 68 credit hours. This number of credit hours is a statewide requirement of the 1996 agreement brokered by the CHE staff among the heads of all registered nursing education programs. Of the total number of credit hours in the proposed degree, 18 credits are in general education, and 50 are in the major field itself. No electives exist in the proposed curriculum.

The curriculum has been designed to meet national standards for accreditation by the National League for Nursing's Accreditation Commission (NLNAC). The institution affirms that it will initiate the process for seeking accreditation through the NLNAC at the earliest possible time. Similarly, licensure by the State Board of Nursing in South Carolina, a division of the state's Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, is necessary for the operation of any ADN program in South Carolina. Approval by the Commission on Higher Education of this program is, therefore, interdependent with the approval process by the State Board of Nursing

The proposed curriculum is similar in content to that offered by the eleven other technical colleges which also offer a program in this field. In addition, two USC campuses (USC-Aiken and USC-Lancaster) currently offer associate degree programs in Nursing, although USC-Aiken is in discussions to "transition" its ADN program to Aiken Technical College in the same manner that the current program proposal represents a change of venue from USC-Spartanburg to Spartanburg Technical College. All these programs draw their student bodies for the ADN programs almost exclusively from students in their geographic areas. Thus, while this proposed program will represent an additional duplication of program, given the great and growing need for registered nurses and its non-competitive nature with existing programs, it does not represent "unnecessary" duplication.

The institution already has a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) certificate program. The new ADN program will be integrated with the curricular offerings of the LPN program so that there will be multiple entry and multiple exit points for the nursing area of the curriculum. Although students may opt out of the ADN program to become LPNs, the program itself is an Associate Degree in Nursing. The LPN program which currently exists will be discontinued simultaneously with the implementation of this proposal.

The proposal from Spartanburg Technical College indicates that twelve new faculty members will be hired in the first two years of the program. These hirings, added to the existing cohort of four full-time nursing faculty in the existing Licensed Practical

Nurse (LPN) certificate program, will provide a full complement of 16 nursing faculty, both didactic and clinical, for the new program with its multiple entry and multiple exit points. As many as 10-20 adjunct instructors will be hired “as needed” during the first three years of the program’s operations.

All full-time faculty will be masters-prepared in the field of Nursing, according to the proposal. However, the site visit by the SBN has found that five of the newly hired faculty are bachelor-prepared nurses, currently working toward a master’s degree. These faculty members will require State Board of Nursing approval as exceptions to the SBN’s policy. Laboratory operators must hold at least a bachelor’s degree in field.

Enrollment in the proposed program is estimated to vary each academic year, because of the entry of a fall and spring cohort. Spring enrollments by headcount will be the highest in each year, beginning with 117 headcount in FY 2004-05 and increasing to 216 in 2005-2006 and thereafter. The FTE enrollment in the first year will be 140; in the succeeding years, there will be 253.7 FTE. If enrollment projections are met, the program will meet the current CHE program productivity standards for enrollment.

There are no new physical plant requirements for the proposed program, since the space will be available for clinical laboratories and didactic classrooms in a new health sciences building which was constructed in 2001. Equipment needs are substantial and are estimated to cost \$355,476 over the first three years of the program’s implementation. Most of this outlay (\$272,500) will occur in the 2004-2005 academic year. The library support at the institution for nursing has been adequate for the LPN program, but will need additional funding of \$11,000 over the first three years, plus approximately \$1,000 per year after the first three years for updating materials on hand.

New costs for the program are estimated to begin at \$1,124,750 in year one. These costs include program administration (\$50,000) faculty salaries/fringe (\$ 731,250), clerical and support personnel (\$30,000), supplies and materials (\$36,000), library resources (\$5,000), equipment (\$272,500). Cost estimates have been projected at \$949,488 in the second year and \$976,402 in the third year. While cost calculations for fourth and fifth years are not included as a requirement for technical college programs, in this case the institution included cost estimates for these two additional years, showing that the costs are estimated to rise again in the fourth year (\$1,006,205) and the fifth year (\$1,012,952). Thus, for the program’s first three years costs will total \$3,050,640 and for the first five years costs will total \$5,069,797. Whether a three or five year projection is used, the institutional estimate shows that institutional costs to operate of the program will average just over \$1,000,000 per year.

Shown below are the estimated Mission Resource Requirement (MRR) costs to the state and new costs not funded by the MRR associated with implementation of the proposed program for its first three years. Also shown are the estimated revenues projected under the MRR and the Resource Allocation Plan as well as student tuition.

Year	Estimated MRR Cost for Proposed Program	Extraordinary (Non-MRR) Costs for Proposed Program	Total Costs	State Appropriation	Tuition + Additional Funds	Total Revenue
2004-05	\$2,417,919	0	\$2,417,919	\$0	\$809,560	\$809,560
2005-06	4,381,615	0	\$4,381,615	659,080	819,782	\$1,478,862
2006-07	4,381,615	0	\$4,381,615	1,194,595	1,894,877	\$3,089,472

These data demonstrate that if Spartanburg Technical College meets the projected student enrollments and contains costs as they are shown in the proposal, the program will not be able to cover new costs with revenues it generates by the third year of its implementation. Spartanburg Technical College officials have affirmed that the institution will have either internal institutional sources of funding and/or community-based financial support to operate the program with the quality necessary to produce successful graduates.

In summary, Spartanburg Technical College will offer an Associate in Health Sciences degree with a major in Nursing that will allow students to meet the needs of the service area for persons who are eligible to become Registered Nurses. The program will provide multiple entry points to assure that current LPNs are able to become Associate Degree nurses ready to take the NCLEX for becoming a Registered Nurse; and multiple exit points to assure that those students who choose to exit early and become Licensed Practical Nurses can do so. The program is necessary to help address the need for many more Registered Nurses than are available to fill existing positions. Even if the highest enrollments projected for this program are met, this program alone cannot meet the need in the Spartanburg service region for new Registered Nurses. Between 85 and 121 more new Registered Nurses will be necessary to meet the estimated need in the Spartanburg three-county service area within the first three years of the program's existence. This is true even though the proposed program is scheduled to produce approximately twice as many graduates per year as the existing associate degree program in Nursing at USC-Spartanburg. The USC-Spartanburg program will be phased out simultaneously with the implementation of this program.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve Spartanburg Technical College's proposed program leading to the Associate of Health Sciences degree with a major in Nursing for implementation in Fall 2004, provided that: 1) no "unique cost" or other special State funding be required or requested; 2) the State Board of Nursing approve the program at its meeting on May 20, 2004; and 3) the existing LPN program discontinue direct enrollment of new students with the implementing of the proposed ADN program and be used as a "stop out" credential only.